

Fruit of the Month

PLANTAINS!



This popular banana in Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian countries is often referred to as a cooking banana. Plantains resemble bananas but they are longer in length, thicker skinned, and starchier in flavor. In most countries, plantains are used more like a vegetable than a fruit. They are not suitable for eating raw unless very ripe, when they turn completely black. One half of a large plantain is low in sodium, high in potassium and vitamin A, and a good source of fiber. This versatile fruit has three unique stages when they can be eaten.

Green plantains taste more like a potato with a starchy texture. At this stage, the interior is yellowish or slightly pink. The fruit is firm and is often used as side dishes.

Yellow plantains are the middle stage of the fruit. These plantains can have some brownish-black spots. Their role now is both vegetable and fruit and is used in dishes that request for a slightly sweet taste and firm texture.

Black plantains are typically found in sweeter recipes. These plantains are all black or spotty black and are soft. Black plantains can be eaten out of hand.

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 cup			
Servings Per Container			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories	180	Calories from Fat	5
		% Daily Value*	
Total Fat	1g		1%
Saturated Fat	0g		0%
Cholesterol	0mg		0%
Sodium	5mg		0%
Total Carbohydrate	47g		16%
Dietary Fiber	3g		12%
Sugars	8g		
Protein	2g		
Vitamin A	35%	Vitamin C	45%
Calcium	0%	Iron	4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4			

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation

Plantains are available year round. You can buy plantains at any stage (green, yellow, or black) depending on your use and when you want to enjoy them.

Plantains need to be stored at room temperature. After desired stage of ripeness is reached it's okay to refrigerate 2 to 3 days before cooking to slow down the ripen process. As with other bananas, plantains freeze well.

Plantains can be difficult to peel depending on their stage of ripeness. Black plantains are peeled like other bananas. It's best to use cut the top and bottom of the banana first. Then using the tip of the knife, run the knife along the skin from the top to the bottom of the banana. Repeat this step on all four ridges. Next, carefully peel the skin away from the pulp. The greener the plantain, the thicker the skin; it's best to peel green plantains under water to minimize bruising.



Make Plantains Part of Your 5 A Day Plan

- Plantains make a great addition to soups and stews.
- Green plantains are best used like potatoes — baked or boiled then mashed.
- Also bake ripe plantains to serve with roasted meats.
- Add ripe black plantains in baked desserts like bread.
- Grill yellow plantains! Peel them first and then place on the grill, basting with your favorite marinade.

Recipes

Candied Plantains

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day servings

Source: Turbana

Ingredients

4 ripe (black) plantains

1 cup skim milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar

4 Tbsp butter

Peel plantains, place in a baking dish, and pour the milk and sugar over the bananas. Spread the butter over each plantain. Bake at 400° F for 30 minutes until golden brown. Serve as a side dish.

Microwave method: cut the ends of the unpeeled plantains, place on microwave safe plate, and place moist paper towel on top of the plantains. Microwave on high for 8 minutes or until the skin bursts open. Let cool, then peel the skins, and place in microwave safe baking dish. Pour milk and sugar, and then spread butter over each plantain. Microwave on high for 12 minutes.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 190, Protein 2g, Fat 2g, Calories From Fat 9%, Cholesterol 5mg, Carbohydrates 44g, Fiber 2g, Sodium 48mg.

Sautéed Plantains & Sweet Potatoes

Makes 6 side dish servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Frieda's

Ingredients

2 Tbsp butter

2 Tbsp olive oil

2 cups sliced cooked sweet potatoes or yams

2 plantains, peeled and chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup green onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup low sodium chicken or beef broth

2 Tbsp fresh herbs (thyme, dill, or chervil), chopped



In a large skillet, melt the first 2 Tbsp butter and oil until hot. Add potatoes, plantains, onions, ham if desired, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, about 5 minutes. Add broth; cover and simmer 10 minutes or till plantains are tender. Add desired fresh herbs.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 177, Protein 2g, Fat 6g, Calories From Fat 30%, Cholesterol 4mg, Carbohydrates 31g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 34mg.

Squash & Plantain Puree

Makes 6 side dish servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Frieda's

Ingredients

2 plantains, peeled and chopped

1½ cups low sodium chicken broth

2 cups summer squash (any type), cooked and mashed

¼ cup light cream

¼ cup fat free sour cream

2 Tbsp butter

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp pepper

2 tsp fresh thyme or basil, chopped, or ½ tsp dried herbs, crushed

In a 2-quart saucepan, place chopped plantains and chicken broth. Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer 10 to 12 minutes or until plantains are tender. Drain well. Place cooked plantains in blender container or food processor bowl with cooked, mashed squash, light cream, sour cream, butter or margarine, salt, pepper, and thyme or basil. Cover and process until smooth. Transfer puree back to saucepan; stir in additional broth to make desired consistency. Cook over medium heat until heated through.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories 123, Protein 3g, Fat 4g, Calories From Fat 24%, Cholesterol 11mg, Carbohydrates 22g, Fiber 2g, Sodium 133mg.

Mexican Vegetable Sauté

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one and one half servings

Source: Frieda's

Starchy and squash-type vegetables may be varied according to the seasons.

Ingredients

2 Tbsp vegetable oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup onions, chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled, halved and thinly sliced

2 fresh Jalapeno chilies, seeded and cut into thin strips

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cooked plantains, peeled and diced

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups zucchini, diced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole kernel corn

1 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Heat oil in a large skillet; sauté onion, elephant garlic and chilies over medium-low heat for 3 to 5 minutes, or till garlic is tender (do not allow vegetables to burn). Add potatoes and squash; sauté 5-10 minutes more or till squash is tender. Add corn and cilantro; season to taste. Cook until warmed through.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories 147, Protein 3g, Fat 5g, Calories From Fat 26%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 27g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 33mg.

Grilled Vegetables, Exotic Style

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Frieda's

Ingredients

- 1 lb Sweet dumpling squash, halved and seeded
- 1 lb baby red potatoes
- 1 lb Japanese eggplant, stem removed, and halved lengthwise
- 1 cup baby carrots
- 4 plantains, with peel and quartered
- 1 8-oz pkg cactus pads, thorns removed and cut into 1-inch wide strips
- 1 10-oz pkg pearl onions, peeled according to pkg. directions
- 1 4-oz pkg fresh shitake mushrooms, stems removed

Basting Sauce

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp fresh mint, minced
- 1 Tbsp fresh oregano, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pepper

Chopped fresh mint and oregano leaves for garnish

Pre-cook* squash, potatoes, eggplant, baby carrots, plantains, cactus leaves and pearl onions until not quite tender. Meanwhile, combine oil, lime juice, garlic and herbs until well-combined. Drain vegetables well; arrange on grill** over medium hot coals or on lightly oiled, preheated broiler pan. Brush vegetables liberally with basting sauce; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill or broil 5 to 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender, brushing frequently with basting sauce and turning once. Remove from grill and peel plantains. Spoon remaining sauce over veggies to serve. Sprinkle chopped mint and oregano on top.

*To pre-cook squash, cook quartered in microwave oven in 1/4 cup water, loosely covered, for 5 to 9 minutes, depending on size. Or steam for 20 to 30 minutes until nearly tender. Pre-cook pearl onions as directed on package.

**Small shiitake or oyster mushrooms and pearl onions can be threaded on skewers for easier handling and to prevent accidental "fall-throughs" on grill.

Nutrition information per serving: Calories 366, Protein 7g, Fat 8g, Calories From Fat 18%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 75g, Fiber 9g, Sodium 160mg.